THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The demand is for grant of pension to those ex-servicemen who had put in less than 15 years of service. As per existing rules, minimum qualifying service for pension eligibility is 15 years for Personnel Below Officer Rank and 20 years for Commissioned Officers.

(c) M.P.s and ex-servicemen belong to two distinct categories which are not comparable, being governed by separate set of rules.

(d) No change in the existing policy is contemplated by the Government.

Modernisation of Armed Forces

†1698. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether for modernization and increasing the striking capabilities of the forces, Government are importing defence equipments from different countries and carrying out production through joint venture;

(b) whether it has been ensured that state of the art technologies are being imported for setting up joint ventures with different countries; and

(c) whether it is contemplated to sign any joint venture agreement with countries/companies in under which the said country/company would purchase back the products in excess to the requirement of the country, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Modernisation of the Armed Forces, a continuous process based on threat perception, technological changes and budget allocations, is undertaken with a view to increasing the striking capabilities of the forces, through acquisition from indigenous as well as foreign sources in terms of the provisions of Defence Procurement Procedure 2006. The import option is exercised only when it is absolutely necessary to procure the items within a definite time frame on operational grounds to bridge the capability gaps and normally when such equipment cannot be sourced indigenously within a specified timeframe.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Joint ventures where feasible, have been set up with various friendly countries by importing state of-the-art technologies.

Joint venture products would be used by the partner countries, which could also be exported to other friendly countries, depending upon the agreements.

Crash of ALWH Dhruv

†1699. SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recurring accidents of Advanced Light Weight Helicopter 'Dhruv' of Indian Air Force, jointly developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Ministry of Defence;

(b) if so, the date-wise details of such accidents;

(c) the details of steps taken by Government to avoid such accidents; and

(d) the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) One Dhruv helicopter of the Indian Air Force (IAF) met with an accident on 2.2.2007 while practicing for the Aero India Show recently. Since its introduction in the IAF, this is the only case of accident involving 'Dhruv' helicopters.

(c) and (d) A continuous and multi-faceted effort is always underway in the Indian Air Force to enhance and upgrade flight safety. Measures to enhance the quality of training to improve the skill-levels, ability to exercise sound judgment and situational awareness of pilots are being pursued. Constant interaction with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) of concerned countries are also maintained to overcome the technical defects of aircraft. Besides, anti-bird measures are also undertaken.

Fatalities of defence aircrafts, choppers and human lives

1700. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.